

(Washington, DC) — Congresswoman Gwen Moore released the following statement regarding House passage of the BEACH Act:

“Beach closings have become an unfortunate rite of summer in our region despite the fact that Lake Michigan and its accessible coastline remain a tremendous asset and a national treasure. In the last few years, many beaches in Wisconsin and in Milwaukee have closed for days at a time due to harmful bacteria in the water. The presence of E.coli bacteria has been the main culprit behind these closings.

Yesterday, the House of Representatives passed legislation, the BEACH Act of 2008, to beef up state and local efforts, including right here in Milwaukee, to monitor and increase public awareness about the water quality at our nation’s beaches and coastal recreational areas.

The legislation passed by the House would update and improve the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000 (BEACH Act) which set uniform criteria for testing, monitoring, and notifying the public about potential contaminants in the water. The BEACH also authorized funding to help state and local governments monitor water quality and inform the public of potential hazards.

Rather than responding after another unwelcome public health crisis, Wisconsin now has a program to regularly test water at beaches, including 13 in Milwaukee County, for E. Coli and other harmful pollutants. In 2007, Wisconsin received \$225,270 in funding to support these monitoring and public notification efforts.

While I look forward to the day when we can ensure that high levels of E. Coli and other harmful bacteria never occur in the Great Lakes in the first place, this bill will help further efforts to keep our families out of waters when they pose a threat to their health and help local health departments track down where harmful pollutants are entering our precious waters.

The BEACH Act of 2008 (H.R. 2537) would increase federal funding for the program by 33% to allow Milwaukee County and others to more fully implement monitoring and public awareness programs. The bill would also support efforts to develop faster testing methods so that officials

can know what's in the water faster and get those results to the public quicker. The bill would also allow states to use funds to track where the pollutants are coming from, identify those sources, and make that information available to the public."

The bill passed the House by a voice vote. It is now headed to the Senate for consideration there.

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